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THE EDITOR

The crusade against the obnoxious billboard is awakening national interest. The American Park and Outdoor Art Association, at its annual convention at Chicago, gave considerable time to the discussion of the nuisance. Papers were presented, and an exhaustive report on proper methods of limiting public advertising was read by Mr. Frederick Law Omstead, Jr. It seems very shortsighted for cities and towns to expend such large sums for the beautifying of parks, squares, and boulevards, to have their effects so provokingly marred by the hideous billboards staring at us from the most conspicuous places. The people, who by using the parks and promenades give value to abutting property, may some day demonstrate their right to the use to which that property shall be put. The time is not distant when disturbances to the eye will be placed under the ban, as are disturbances and nuisances of sound to the ear and vile odors to the nose. Why should not the most important sense of all have some law that will protect it from the displeasure and pain caused by public and legalized ugliness and discord?

The progress of art in our everyday life is conspicuous. The beauty of our parks and other improvements are important agencies toward improving the peace-loving orderliness of our citizens. Everything that will develop this outdoor art should be done, for it is an expenditure for the people that needs it most. Its moral bearing on the masses of the poor cannot be overestimated. It is better economy to prevent lawlessness and crime in the bud than to isolate it in jail and prison after it has ripened into fruit. The park and public playground have a large moral field of usefulness, without more than mentioning the well-known benefits of rest and recreation which they afford. Thus, as we have said, everything should be done to help along the art of outdoors, and everything should be done to limit whatever may counteract or overcome the beneficent influences that attractive nature might have on the individual. We are a queer people who with one lavish hand expend thousands for public improvements and with the other take in a paltry hundred or so in revenue from billboard companies that make our streets a disgrace.

The billboard abomination can be limited in various ways. It must first be seen by a sufficient number to be a nuisance; for familiarity has bred indifference. Then societies and public-spirited individuals will be supported when legal or other action is taken. Already an ordinance has been introduced in the Council at Chicago to restrict the billboard. One of its items is that no billboard shall

be erected without the consent of at least three-fourths of the frontage on the block. Another suggestion, from another city, is that park boards prohibit the display of advertising on all streets opening on parks and park boulevards. This, if carried out, would be an important reform. Limiting the height and length of billboards in any one place might be done. Taxing them, as is done in Europe, would at least bring in some revenue, if it did not result in some reduction of our street decoration. This movement has no intention of doing away with the billboard; it seeks only to limit its activity to localities where it will not disturb or destroy the effect of parks and public improvements. It is not a fad nor idiosyncrasy of idealistic reformers. It is a common-sense movement of interested citizens for the improvement of the appearance of our cities for the good of all. Those who see have a right to lead the blind.



John Singer Sargent is the most conspicuous name in contemporary art. European critics are using up their adjectives in their enthusiasm over his portraits in the Royal Academy Exhibition in London and in the American section at the Paris Exposition. He is at the height of his fame and power as a painter, and it is difficult to see how his genius can find more exalted expression. But he outdoes himself each year. His portrait of the three sisters in the Royal Academy is a distinguished masterpiece, and is the best canvas he has ever exhibited. He has been highly honored by medals and decorations, and takes his place modestly but worthily among the immortals of all time. With Sargent in painting and Saint Gaudens in sculpture, America can hold her own with the world's best in nineteenth-century art.



The current issue of *BRUSH AND PENCIL* gives considerable space to the arts on view at the Paris Exposition. The first installment of American sculpture is presented. Mr. Taft has sufficient authority as sculptor and critic to give weight to his words. We have taken the liberty of reprinting certain illustrations which have sufficient cumulative value to excuse their reappearance. The comparisons made by Mr. L. H. Gibson, a leading architect of Indianapolis, may be odious to the French, but we believe them well founded. History will use the exposition of 1900 to point the moral of French decadence, and the growing importance of the United States, in art as well as in manufactures and inventions.